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William C. Nelson to Maria C. Nelson (12 July 1862)

William Cowper Nelson

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Camp of the 17th Mississippi Regiment,
4 miles from Richmond, Va, July 12th 1862

My Dear Mother;

I wrote you on the 4th of the present month, informing you of my safety, and giving a disconnected account of the part our Regiment took in the great battle of Richmond. I gave the letter in charge of Mr. Cal. Smith, and also committed to his care several little articles, which formerly belonged to the Yankees, letters, books, &c., all of which I hope have reached you.

Since my last, nothing of importance has happened our Army or at least the portion to which we belong have fallen back to our old position near the city, and will there probably remain till McClellan sees fit to leave the protection of his gunboats, and make another advance upon Richmond, which in my opinion, is an event not much to be anticipated for some time to come yet.

You have of course, seen in the newspapers, a full account of the great victory, and it would be useless for me to recapitulate, suffice it to say that we have gained a great and important victory, and demoralized McClellan's Army to such an extent that it will be long before he can again bring it into any sort of fighting condition; before he can do so, it is possible that European powers may intervene, from the tone of the British press, their efforts for mediation will not be deferred much longer, but should that hope prove vain, and McClellan again advance towards Richmond, we feel confident of our ability, by the aid of Providence, to repel him.

We are now encamped on the Rail Road, about four miles from Richmond and are very pleasantly situated. Have tent flies, which serve very effectually to keep out the sun and rain, the weather for the past few days has been extremely warm, but yesterday we had a refreshing fair, and now it is much more pleasant. On Wednesday last we marched from our position down in Charles City County, to our present one, a distance of about 15 miles, we made it by half past ten o'clock, but the day was extremely warm, and I never recollect to have suffered more from heat.

I secured from the Yankees, one blanket, and two excellent india rubbers, which will serve admirably to keep off the rain, when on a march or on guard.

Your letter of the 3rd ult. which was written you will recollect a week previous to the one sent by Mr. Govan, was received about a week afterwards, it would be better hereafter, when writing by mail, not to direct to any one's care in Richmond, as it will probably retard instead of hastening its reception.

We see by the papers that a cavalry fight took place near Holly Springs, in which the Federals, as usual were beaten, and driven back from H.S. as I suppose that communication is again open.

I send this letter however by Jimmy Sims, who has been discharged, on account of his age I presume, and the fact of his brother being killed, it is a sad blow for his poor Mother;

Good-bye. Write every opportunity, Your loving son
Wm. L. Nelson